SEPTEMBER 2005



VOL. LXX, No. 9

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PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT



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SOLIA - THE HERALD (ISSN 0038-1039) is published monthly for \$15.00 per year: United States, \$20.00 per year: Canada, and \$25.00 per year in other countries by The Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America, 2535 Grey Tower Road, Jackson, MI 49201-9120. Periodicals postage paid at Jackson, Michigan, and additional offices. Phone: (517) 522-3656, Fax: (517) 522-5907. E-mail: solia@roea.org. Internet: http://www.roea.org.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: SOLIA - THE HERALD, P.O. Box 185, Grass Lake, MI 49240-0185, U.S.A.

Articles and news published in SOLIA do not necessarily reflect the views or the endorsement of the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America.

English Section		
'Thine Own of Thine Own': Orthodoxy and Ecology, Dr. Elizabeth Theokritoff		
A Discourse in Iconography,		
St. John (Maximovitch) 4-5		
A.R.C.O.L.A.'s Trip to Montreal,		
Dr. Eleanor Bujea & Psa. Colleen Ungrin 6, 13		
Orthodox Thought & Life:		
Eudaemonism, or the Joy of the Cross?,		
Hierodeacon Calinic (Berger)		
Preotese Retreat, Psa. Nicole Mitescu		
Healing Waters: A Personal Perspective on the Clergy Wives Retreat, Psa. Janene Wey		
Hurricane Katrina Should Make Us Kinder,		
Rev. Dr. Cornel Todeasa		
The Role of Education in the Orthodox Church,		
Janet Beese 11, 16		
Parish Notes: In Honor of 50 Years,		
Psa. Paula Treff		
Financial Report		
College Students Kit		
A Matter of Taste Cookbook 12		
2005 Congress Donations		
Parish Register14-16		
The Divine & Holy Liturgy for Orthodox		
Christians Order Form		
Romanian Section		
Cuvânt de Suflet - Sfânta Cruce "Simbolul		
Mântuitoarelor Patimi'',		
+Irineu, Episcop Vicar		
Sărbătoarea Hramului ''Vetrei Româneşti'',		
Participant		
Rezenzie, Gale Bellas-Papageorge		
Ce Este Antimisul și Care Este Rostul și Semnificația Lui?		
Pr. Prof. Dr. Nicolae D. Necula21-22		
Educarea Creştină A Familiei:		
Sfântul Simeon Stâlpnicul - 1 Septembrie		
Maica Preoteasă23-24		

Fr. GHEORGHE GRIGORESCU FALLEN ASLEEP IN THE LORD

Fremont CA [ROEA Chancery] - The Reverend Father Gheorghe Grigorescu, retired priest of The Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America, fell asleep in the Lord on Friday, 7 October 2005, at his residence in Fremont, California. He had been suffering from failing health for several years.

Father Grigorescu was born on 13 April 1912 in Buz u, Romania. He graduated from the "Bishop Chesarie" Theological Seminary in Buz u in 1934, and went on to earn a degree from the Faculty of Theology in Cernauci, Romania. He was ordained into the Holy Priesthood on 20 December 1940 by Bishop ANTIM (Cazota) in Bucharest and assigned to the Saint Dumitru Parish in the city of Ploie ti, receiving various awards and distinctions throughout his years of service. In 1990, Fr Grigorescu was accepted into The Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America and assigned as priest of the Holy Cross Mission parish in San Jose, California, which he served until he retired in 2000.

The Service for the Burial of a Priest will be presided by V Rev Fr Constantin Alecse (Dean of the ROEA Pacific Deanery), Rev Fr Constantin Lapustea (Parish Priest of Holy Cross Mission), along with other attending clergy, at Lima Funeral Home in Fremont on Friday afternoon, 14 October, at 1:30pm. Burial will follow at a nearby cemetery.

Fr Gheorghe is preceded in death by his only child. Gabriel, who died in 2002. He is survived by his wife, Preoteasa Olga (nee Ionescu), whom he married in 1939, daughter-in-law, Viorica, and grandchildren, Mihaela and Lucian.

Condolences may be sent to the family at: Preoteasa Olga Grigorescu & Family 781 McDuff Avenue Fremont CA 94539-7541 May his memory be eternal!

'THINE OWN OF THINE OWN': ORTHODOXY AND ECOLOGY

Dr. Elizabeth Theokritoff

To talk about "saving the earth" is hardly an exageration. Flooding due to global warming threatens ast areas of coastland. An estimated ten percent of all pecies are threatened with extinction. Irreplaceable prests vanish by the acre every second. Great rivers o longer reach the sea because their water is taken or irrigation, industry, or to water lawns.

These facts portray creation as something precious and fragile. But the proverbial Martian landing in the JSA might conclude that natural resources are so imitless that they do not merit even respect. About 50 ercent of the paper and 30 percent of the plastics nanufactured at great environmental cost go simply nto packaging - they are made just to be thrown way. Whole neighborhoods are built around use of he car. Every day, millions of bags and other recepacles are thrown away because using durable substiutes would have been inconvenient. Foods such as meef, produced at staggering costs in feed, water and energy, are considered basic staples. If there are some environmental problems, that just means that you inulate your house better (and save on fuel bills!) and but some of your waste into the recycling bin rather han the garbage.

So do we really need to save the earth - or just to

reduce reliance on imported oil?

To some, the environmental crisis means that "progress" has encountered a mere technical hitch, soon to be solved by genetically-engineered supercrops and renewable, non-polluting energy sources. Others, more realistically, call for a change of lifestyle in affluent societies. Limited resources and polluting energy sources are overused, while much of the world's growing population still lacks basic amenities; so, it is only fair for the heaviest users to make the greatest

Increasing numbers of people conclude that the way out of the crisis requires spiritual renewal: not just a change of habits, but a change of hearts - in Christian terms, repentance. Tragically, the environmental implications of our Christian Faith are so little understood, even among Christians, that the Church is the last place most people look for spiritual solutions. They are more likely to turn to the worship of Mother Earth, or native American religions, or witchcraft, or New Age spirituality. Yet this realization that the world needs salvation, requiring a change of heart, is a challenge to the Church. It presents a missionary opportunity perhaps not paralleled since Saint Paul noticed the Athenians' altar to "the unknown god."

In 1989 the late Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios

took a vital initiative when he called for the first of September to be a day of thanksgiving and special prayer for the salvation and protection of God's creation. Following the interest this generated, an inter-Orthodox conference on protection of the environment was convened in Crete in November 1991. Its recommendations speak of "the increasing burden on the natural environment due to human abuse, which the Church names as sin, and for which it calls all human beings to repentance," and continues, the Orthodox Church believes the solution is to be found in the liturgical, eucharistic and ascetic ethos of the Orthodox Tradition."

A eucharistic ethos means, above all, using natural resources with thankfulness, offering them back to God. Such an attitude is incompatible with wastefulness. Similarly, fasting and other ascetic practices make us recognize even the simplest of foods and other creature comforts as gifts, provided to satisfy our needs. They are not ours to abuse and waste just

so long as we can pay for them.

We worship as a community, not as individuals; so a liturgical ethos is also one of sharing. Long before the earth was seen as a whole from space, the Church knew that we stand before God together, and that we hold in common the earthly blessings that He has given to mankind and all creatures. "Not to share our own wealth with the poor is theft from the poor and deprivation of their means of life; we do not possess our own wealth but theirs," Saint John Chrysostom reminds us. This principle, applied to the whole range of natural resources, is particularly relevant because the global environment is squeezed on two sides: by the over-consumption, greed and waste of the affluent, and by the pressing needs of the poor, often forced to deplete the land around them for the sake of food or fuel in the short term. Equitable sharing with other people does not only involve using less of finite resources. It also precludes enjoying conveniences and luxuries for which others are having to pay the hidden environmental price, living with the toxins used in their manufacture and the pollution caused by their use and disposal.

The ethos of the Church means reverence for matter - the world around us, other creatures, our own bodies. It would be hard to miss this attitude in the worship of the Church: we make the sign of the Cross, we venerate icons, we receive Christ Himself in the Eucharist. But it seems quite easy to combine it with contempt for matter in everything non-liturgical, even

A DISCOURSE IN ICONOGRAPHY

by St. John (Maximovitch) of San Francisco

Iconography began on the day our Lord Jesus Christ pressed a cloth to His face and imprinted His divine-human image thereon. According to tradition, Luke the Evangelist painted the image of the Mother of God; and, also according to tradition, there still exist today many Icons which were painted by him. An artist, he painted not only the first Icons of the Mother of God, but also those of the holy Apostles Peter and Paul and, possibly, others which have not come down to us.

Thus did Iconography begin. Then it came to a halt for a time. Christianity was cruelly persecuted: all that was reminiscent of Christ was destroyed and subjected to ridicule. Thus, during the course of the persecutions, Iconography did not develop, but Christians attempted to express in symbols what they wished to convey. Christ was portrayed as the Good Shepherd, and also in the guise of various personalities from pagan mythology. He was also depicted in the form of a vine, an image hearkening back to the Lord's words: "I am the true Vine.... ye are the branches" (St. John 15:1, 5). It was also accepted practice to depict Christ in the form of a fish, because if one writes in Greek "Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior" (lesous Christos, Theou Hios, Soter) and then groups together the first letter of each word, one discovers that one has written the Greek word Ichthys, "fish." And so, Christians depicted a fish, thereby calling to mind these words which were known to those who believed in the Savior. This also became known to the pagans, and consequently the image of the fish was also held suspect.

When, following the victory of Emperor Constantine the Great over Maxentius, freedom was given to Christians, Christianity quickly transformed the Roman Empire and replaced paganism. Then Iconography flourished with full force. We already see directives concerning Iconography at the first ecumenical councils. In some church hymns, which today are still frequently used, mention is also made of Iconography.

Now what are Icons? Icons are precisely the union between painting and those symbols and works of art which replaced Icons during the time of persecution. The Icon is not simply a representation, a portrait. In later times only has the bodily been represented, but an Icon is still supposed to remind people of the spiritual aspect of the person depicted.

Christianity is the inspiration of the world. Christ founded His Church in order to inspire, to transfigure the world, to cleanse it from sin and bring it to that state in which it will exist in the age to come. Chris-

tianity was founded upon the earth and operates upon the earth, but it reaches to Heaven in its structure; Christianity is that bridge and ladder whereby men ascend from the earthly Church to the Heavenly. Therefore, a simple representation which recalls the earthly characteristics of some face is not an Icon. Even an accurate depiction, in the sense of physical build, still signifies nothing. A person may be very beautiful externally, yet at the same time be very evil. On the other hand, he may be ugly, and at the same time a model of righteousness. Thus, we see that an Icon must indeed depict that which we see with our eyes, preserving the characteristics of the body's form, for in this world the soul acts through the body; yet at the same time it must point towards the inner, spiritual essence. The task of the Iconographer is precisely to render, as far as possible and to as great an extent as possible, those spiritual qualities whereby the person depicted acquired the Kingdom of Heaven, whereby he won an imperishable crown from the Lord, for the Church's true significance is the salvation of man's soul. That which is on the earth perishes when we bring the body to the grave; but the soul passes on to another place. When the world comes to an end, consumed by fire, there will be a new earth and a new Heaven, as the Apostle John the Theologian says, for with the eyes of his soul he already foresaw the New Jerusalem, so clearly described in his sacred Revelation. The Lord came to prepare the whole world for this spiritual rebirth. To prepare oneself for this new Kingdom, one must uproot from within oneself those seeds of sin which entered mankind with our ancestors' fall into sin, distorting our pristine, grace-endowed nature; and one must plant within oneself those virtues which they lost in the fall. The Christian's goal is to change daily, to improve daily, and it is of this that our Icons speak.

In calling to mind the saints and their struggles, an Icon does not simply represent the saint as he appeared upon the earth. No, the Icon depicts his inner spiritual struggle; it portrays how he attained to that state where he is now considered an angel on earth, a heavenly man. This is precisely the manner in which the Mother of God and Jesus Christ are portrayed. Icons should depict that transcendent sanctity which permeated the saints. The Lord Jesus Christ is the union of all that is human and all that is divine; and when depicted in an Icon, the Savior must be painted so that we sense that He is a man, a real man, yet at the same time something more exalted than a man, that we not simply approach Him as we approach a visitor or an acquaintance. No, we should feel that He is One Who is close to us, our Lord Who is merciful to us, and at the same time an awe-inspiring Judge Who wants us to follow Him and wishes to lead us to the Kingdom of Heaven. Therefore, we must not turn away to one side or the other. We should not depict only the spiritual aspect of the saint, completely disregarding how he looked while alive on earth. This

vould also be an extreme. All saints should be depicted so as to convey their individual characteristics as much as possible—soldiers should be portrayed arrayed for battle; holy hierarchs in their episcopal restments. It is incorrect to depict bishops of the first centuries vested in the *sakkos*, for at that time bishops wore the *phelonion*, not the *sakkos*, and yet this is not such a great error, for it is far better to make a mistake in what is physical than in what is spiritual, to ignore, as it were, the spiritual aspect.

However, it is far worse when everything is correct in the physical, bodily sense, but the saint appears as an ordinary man, as if he had been photographed, completely devoid of the spiritual. When this is the case, the depiction cannot be considered an Icon. Sometimes much attention is spent on making the Icon beautiful. If this is not detrimental to the spirituality of the Icon, it is good, but if the beauty distracts our vision to such an extent that we forget what is most important - that one must save one's soul, must raise one's soul to the heights of Heaven - the beauty of the depiction is already detrimental. It cannot be considered an Icon, but merely a painting. It may be very beautiful, but it is not an Icon. An Icon is an image which leads us to a holy, God-pleasing person, or raises us up to Heaven, or evokes a feeling of repentance, of compunction, of prayer, a feeling that one must bow down before this image. The value of an Icon lies in the fact that, when we approach it, we want to pray before it with reverence. If the image elicits this feeling, it is an Icon.

This is what our Iconographers were zealous about - those ancient Iconographers of the time before the conversion of Russia, of whom there were many, and our Russian Iconographers, too, beginning with the Venerable Alypius of the Kiev Caves, who painted a number of Icons of the Mother of God, some of which still survive. These wondrous Icons, which continued the Byzantine tradition of the painting of Icons which inspire compunction, were not necessarily painted in dark colors; frequently they were done in bright hues; but these colors evoked a desire to pray before such Icons. The holy hierarch Peter, a native of Galicia who later became Metropolitan of Kiev and All Russia, painted Icons, some of which were until recently to be found in the Cathedral of the Dormition in Moscow. An entire school of Iconography was established in Novgorod under the direction of the holy hierarch Alexis of Novgorod, a whole series of whose Icons have been preserved. The Venerable Andrew Rublev painted an Icon of the Holy Trinity which is now famous not only in the Christian world, but throughout the half-Christian world as well.

Unfortunately, this Orthodox movement as a whole started to collapse when Russia began to be infiltrated by Western influence. In certain respects, Russia's acquaintance with the European West was very beneficial. Many technical sciences and much other useful knowledge came from the West. We know that

Christianity has never had any aversion to knowledge of that which originates outside itself. Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian and John Chrysostom studied in pagan universities, and many writers, among whom were our spiritual authors and many of the best theologians, were well acquainted with pagan writers. The Apostle Paul himself cited quotations from pagan poets even in the Holy Scriptures. Nevertheless, not all that was Western was good for Russia. It also wrought horrible moral damage at that time, for the Russians began to accept, along with useful knowledge, that which was alien to our Orthodox way of life, to our Orthodox faith. The educated portion of society soon sundered themselves from the life of the people and from the Orthodox Church, in which all was regulated by ecclesiastical norms. Later, alien influence touched Iconography as well. Images of the Western type began to appear, perhaps beautiful from an artistic point of view, but completely lacking in sanctity, beautiful in the sense of earthly beauty, but even scandalous at times, and devoid of spirituality. Such were not Icons. They were distortions of Icons, exhibiting a lack of comprehension of what an Icon actually is.

The purpose of this article is, first of all, to promote an understanding of the true Icon, and secondly, to cultivate a love for the Icon and the desire that our churches and our homes be adorned with genuine Icons and not with Western paintings which tell us nothing about righteousness or sanctity, but are merely pleasant to look upon. Of course, there are Icons painted correctly in the Iconographic sense, but yet very crudely executed. One can paint quite correctly in the theoretical sense and at the same time quite poorly from a practical standpoint. This does not mean that, from the principle of Iconography itself, these Icons are bad. On the other hand, it happens that one can paint beautifully, yet completely ignore the rules of Iconography. Both such approaches are harmful. One must strive to paint Icons well in principle, method and execution. This is why we oppose certain people and their attempts to paint our churches, for they have the wrong approach, the wrong point of view. They may paint well, perhaps; but when the point of view is incorrect, when the direction is wrong, no matter how well the locomotive runs, it nonetheless slips off the track and is derailed. This is precisely what happens to those who execute their work technically and correctly, yet due to an incorrect approach and an incorrect point of view, they travel the wrong path.

Orthodox Life, Vol. 30, No. 1 (Jan-Feb 1980), pp. 42-45. Translated from: *Heritage*, Vol. 1, # 1 (September, 1968), pp. 4-8.

OCTOBER ISSUE DEADLINE

November 15

A.R.C.O.L.A.'S TRIP TO MONTREAL

September 16-18, 2005



With our plans finally under way, A.R.C.O.L.A. President, Dr. Eleanor Bujea of Regina, SK and Vice President, Psa. Colleen Ungrin of Winnipeg, MB headed for Montreal. Upon arrival in Montreal, Buna Vestire's Ladies Auxiliary President Lidia Constantinesco met us at the airport. She knew we received no food on the plane, so we were whisked away to lunch where we enjoyed the food and each other's company. We were then taken to the Buna Vestire parish house where we were greeted and housed. Very Rev. Fr. Constantin Tofan, who is now serving the parish, was our host for the weekend. What wonderful hospitality we experienced.

The next morning, we were taken through the Buna Vestire church complex which encompasses the Church, the Church Office, the hall, the kitchen and the parish house with the Casa Romaneasca right next door. Upon our arrival to a hall area, we met again with Fr. Constantin Tofan, Fr. Codrut Ion, President Lidia and about fifteen ladies of the Buna Vestire and the St. Martyr Brancoveanu ladies auxiliaries. After introductions, the presentations got underway. In order to lay the scene for the meeting, Dr. Eleanor related a little about the Romanian Orthodox Church in Canada, the development of the Orthodox Brotherhood of Canada, the Orthodox Christian Centre, the religious education Camp St. Nicholas, the Romanian Ortho-

dox Deanery of Canada and finally A.R.C.O.L.A. The participants were given copies of two A.R.C.O.L.A. brochures, the first describing the purposes of the organization and the other about how to plan a religious education retreat. Copies of the Constitution and Bylaws were distributed, and we "walked through" the Bylaws answering any questions that were put to us. The Guide Book was printed on the "flip side" of the Constitution and Bylaws, and some time was devoted to the important dates for the organization.

Psa. Colleen Ungrin was introduced, and she dealt with some of the work we did to organize A.R.C.O.L.A. and then she addressed the importance of the ladies auxiliaries meeting together nationally to accomplish the concerns of the ladies on cross-Canada issues. A.R.C.O.L.A. has already contributed to the work the I.O.C.C. is doing in Romania to control the spread and treatment of AIDS. She also addressed other issues like the St. Dimitrie project of the OCMC working with the problem of alcoholism in Romania. She then related Canadian issues regarding our government's consent to removing prayer from schools, their new laws regarding same sex marriages, etc. She concluded her presentation with the importance of the ladies auxiliaries to unify and work together to make our concerns known nationally. We then enjoyed lunch

EUDAEMONISM, OR THE JOY OF THE CROSS?

by Hierodeacon Calinic (Berger)

What is the goal of life? According to one Ortholox thinker, Christos Yannaras, the goal of life in today's world has become eudaemonism, or more simply put, a pleasant life on earth. A pleasant life on earth has become not only the goal of life in the contemporary world, but also, the meaning of life.

This goal or meaning of life is unquestioned in the modern world. A pleasant life on earth therefore takes its place at the top of the human hierarchy of values, and all things in life ultimately serve it. This includes politics, government, law, art, science, technology, entertainment, ethics and last, but not least, religion. All of these activities of human thought and culture are placed into the service of attaining a pleasant life on earth. Who could argue with such a seemingly humane, civilized, even advanced, view of the meaning and goal of life? After all, doesn't God want us to be happy?

Of course, it's easy to be seduced by such a scheme

in affluent countries, but even there life is not so simple. Unforeseen difficulties occur, in relationships, in families, with illnesses, with death. As a rule, these difficulties are banished from the thought and culture of modern life, as they may obscure its eudaemonistic goal. We prefer to live in denial.

Yannaras also points out that God is banished from modern life

for this very same reason. It's not because people are explicitly saying that God is bad, or evil. Modern man wants to be "religious," but without any demands made on him. And this is the problem: deep down we know that God, too, is a person, and may make demands on us. He may interfere in some imagined way with the goal of a pleasant life on earth. As a rule, any unchanging truth, principle or teaching is unacceptable, insofar as it, too, might interfere with this goal. People want only just enough of God and religion to enhance their pleasant life. No more, and no less.

In such a scheme, the Cross becomes "foolishness" (1 Cor 1:18) all over again, as does any form of self-sacrifice for God, the Church, or any other goal that does not ultimately serve the goal of a pleasant life on earth. Any moral code, and much less any call to spiritual perfection, is unacceptable if it in any way interferes with desires or activities that make life more "pleasant." These activities are not necessarily "sinful" ones.

St. Theophan the Recluse saw the beginnings of this approach to and philosophy of life over a century ago. In describing the contemporary man of his day,

St. Theophan wrote that "he is neither spiritual, nor worldly. He comes to church, lights a candle, and that suffices." In other words, he wishes to be "religious" in so far as the Cross of Christ makes no demands on him.

But the cross is a reality of life. Each person will encounter a cross sent to him by God. He can carry it, or not carry it. In either case, once the cross is presented, one cannot remain the same afterwards. Some crosses are heavier than others. Some crosses Christians take up willingly; other crosses are given them by God in a mystery, without their asking for these crosses. In either case, God seeks a particular struggle, a particular growth in character, from each person. Christians struggle to carry their crosses. What is the purpose of these crosses?

The goal of the Cross, and the goal of Christianity, as Yannaras so astutely points out, is not to make Christians "good" people, nor the world a utopian

paradise. The goal of Christianity is to make Christians like Christ. The goal of life on earth is to acquire the Holy Spirit, and thereby attain the resurrection. While the world denies its own fleeting nature, and does everything it can to substitute the reality of death and with a myth of eternal youth, Christianity confronts death directly. It confronts it directly because our

God became a man and conquered death.

Christ lives in His resurrected body for all eternity. He wants us to do the same. He wants us to be co-conquerors of death with Him. But death is not conquered by means of a pleasant life on earth. Death is conquered by death — as we sing on Pascha, "trampling down death by death." But not just by any death, but only by death on the Cross — Christ's death, which we must appropriate for ourselves.

Only death on the Cross brings Resurrection. Only death on the Cross is a renunciation of self and all egotism, not unto self-obliteration, but unto Resurrection and life in God. Only this death brings true joy, true happiness, to human life. Any other happiness is vain and false and has only one ultimate end: the grave.

To this end, Christians do not seek a pleasant life on earth, but spiritual perfection. This is the secret to their unconquerable joy, energy, creativity and optimism, come what may in this life. "Through the Cross joy has come to all the world," sings the Church every Sunday. With this joy they bear their crosses, love

PREOTESE RETREAT



This year's Preotese Retreat was held at the Dormition of the Mother of God Monastery in Rives Junction, close to the Vatra, on September 16-18, 2005. We enjoyed the hospitality and kindness of Mother Abbess Gabriella and the other nuns as well as the beauty of the site, the full cycle of the church services, and the comfort of the Guest House.

We were a small group this year, only eight of us, but what we lacked in numbers, we made up in happiness at being together and loving thoughts for those who could not be here this year. Psa Gabriela Rosu had done all the hard work of organizing, publicizing and promoting the weekend, and we surely benefited by her hard work. This year's participants were: Psa Hildegard Grabowski, Psa Lilliana Lupu, Psa Nicole Mitescu, Psa Mary-Lynn Pac-Urar, Psa Gabriela Rosu, Psa Janene Way, Psa Stephanie Subu, and Psa Pat Katsilas, wife of Fr Deacon Dean Katsilas. Our "special guest" was Juliana Marie Subu, the beautiful 5week old daughter of Fr and Psa Subu.

The retreat began on Friday evening with a lovely dinner followed a talk from our first speaker, Mother Gabriella. She emphasized the relationship between monasteries and parish churches and pointed out the similarities between the women monastics and the preotese. We enjoyed listening to her experiences and wisdom and felt truly surrounded by the caring atmosphere of the monastery.

Saturday morning began at 6:00 a.m. with the first church service for the "early birds" among us. At 9:00 there was a hierarchical Divine Liturgy followed by a memorial service for Mother Benedicta. After lunch,

His Eminence Archbishop Nathaniel was our second speaker. He encouraged us to use our specific talents in the service of the church and not to be discouraged by the gap we sometimes find in ourselves between the theory and the reality of living a Christian life. His Eminence reminded us that "there is a certain mantle put on you who are married to the man whose primary purpose is the salvation of the souls entrusted to him." He also encouraged us to pray together as a family in our homes, and that prayer is always answered.

After a short break, we were ready for our third speaker, Presbytera Michelle Jannakos, a respected Orthodox speaker from Fenton, Michigan. As a graduate of St. Vladimir's Seminary, she mentioned to us the advice she heard from Matushka Juliana Schmemman. the wife of Fr. Alexander Schmemman. She told the new clergy wives to be "patient, brave, always smiling, and don't expect anything from anybody." In our society today it is often hard to balance work, family and church obligations. Michelle reminded us that "Marriage is a path to holiness" which is also the title of a book she recommends. She encouraged us to focus on our family and faith, and use the network of friendship of other preotese to help us. We had an opportunity to share experiences and suggestions, and we surely laughed at each other's stories of how to solve a variety of problems.

On Sunday morning there was Holy Liturgy followed by lunch (yet another delicious meal!) and a final time to share together before saying goodbye.

As my husband was driving me to the airport on the

HEALING WATERS:

A personal perspective on the Clergy Wives Retreat

"As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for Thee, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the iving God..." (Psalm 42).

I have a love-hate relationship with September. It marks the end of a long hot summer and is the harbinger of the cool, crisp and exuberant colour that is autumn. It is full of the chaos of getting children settled once again into school, and the contemplation of the Nativity of the Mother of God and the Exaltation of the Wondrous and Life Giving Cross. It is time to participate in our parish annual women's retreat, the national youth convention, the beginning of the church school year, my husband's birthday, and our wedding anniversary. But, nestled right in the middle, is an oasis of healing waters — the Clergy Wives Retreat.

Since my husband's ordination into the diaconate in 1997, I have found this to be a priority for my own spiritual health and well-being, as well as a rejuvenation of my mind, soul, body, and spirit. Invariably, as I leave Indianapolis Friday night and head out for that Pilgrimage North to Michigan, it is the end of a long week and I find myself fatigued, empty, and in need of healing and restoration. In like manner, as I load up my car on Sunday afternoon and head back toward home, I am refreshed, restored, and ready once again

to take on the (hopefully) holy chaos.

Like most women trying to juggle their roles as wife/mother/soul mate/daughter/employee, I frequently experience the need to "retreat and de-stress" in order to regain my perspective. When people ask me about my newfound experiences as the wife of a priest, I always tell them the same thing: "It's like that old expression — 'deer in the headlights' — I am about to die — I see it coming, and I can't do a thing about it!" While death is certainly a part of it (and that is true for all who strive to deny themselves, take up their cross and follow Christ), it is also a profoundly life-giving

experience.

And for me, the Pilgrimage North is essential. It has become that oasis of healing waters for me. I am thirsty for the fellowship, counsel, and encouragement of my sisters in Christ who, like me, deal with the hectic schedules, conflicts, and demands that are inherent in the life of a priest. We as wives, whether we realized it at the time or not, were also "pressed into service" when our husbands were "pressed upon the altar" and called by God to serve. But our service is one of support, compassion, listening, encouragement, exhortation, tears, and much prayer in the still watches of the night. And while much grace is given to me by God (and my father confessor), there are times when I am absolutely drained, bereft, and dry — in need of encouragement and exhortation.

By the grace of God, I have found the retreats to be

those "healing waters" at the pool of Siloam — God stirs them up, but unlike the sick man at the pool, I am helped into those waters by those who surround me, my fellow sojourners, my fellow priests' wives. And I also find Life, just as the sick man of old (John 5:7-9).

At other times, the retreats have become "the still waters" by which I am led (Psalm 23). Because of His infinite love and care for me, He speaks in a still, small voice both in the roiling waters and the tranquil; and in this fellowship, this Pilgrimage North, He speaks words of healing and restoration to my soul.

Forgive me, O Lord, when I allow the cares of this world, which today loom large and tomorrow are forgotten, to drown out the sound of your Life-giving voice. Forgive me, when my ears are stopped by the cacophony of my own incessant chatter and unbridled anxiety. Whether it be by the invigorating, churning waters of Siloam, or the peaceful still waters of the valley, grant healing and restoration; and lead me along the paths of repentance and salvation for Your name's sake. Amen.

"Ho! Every one who thirsts, come to the waters; And you who have no money come, buy and eat..." (Isaiah 55).

Postscript:

My heartfelt thanks to His Eminence, Archbishop NATHANIEL, whose dedication and compassion for his flock has never flagged and whose sacrifice of time and energy has made this event happen year after year. Pray for us, O Master, that we may ever seek that water which assuages every thirst, and heals every infirmity of soul and body, and "generates fruits of new life...".

Psa. Janene Wey

Eudaemonism ... Cont. from page 7

their enemies, pray, fast, and struggle against their passions in a spirit of humble-mindedness. They strive to be one with Christ, the most noble, just, humble, energetic and optimistic man that ever was and ever will be.

Such a path, the path of Christ, is a bold path, a narrow way, one unpopular and "foolish," mocked, if not scorned, by the world. To carry the Cross takes courage and even bravery. All of us must strive to carry our crosses and not avoid them. But Christ will not leave us orphans, He will lift us up. Christians know this from experience, and from His own example. Only then does the world become a place filled with light and joy, a mirror of God and a ladder to Him. All things then point to the Cross and to the Resurrection. "And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all things unto Myself" (John 12:32).

HURRICANE KATRINA SHOULD MAKE US KINDER

Rev. Dr. Cornel Todeasa

Usually, I do not watch much TV. But for more than a week, I have been glued to the TV set. I have been horrified, as anyone else in the whole world, by the devastation that Hurricane Katrina left behind. I have gone through a variety of feelings, ranging from disbelief, to denial, to outrageous anger. As a person who spends his vacation at the seashore, I thought that I would never go close to the ocean ever again. But the other day, I had an urge to go to the ocean, to see the water. I went to Seaside Park in Bridgeport — a place where I sometimes go to take walks by the sea.

I did not understand what that urge was all about until I got there. As I gazed across Long Island Sound, I realized I was upset with the ocean, with the water

of the ocean.

But as I looked the ocean in the eyes, so to speak, it remained calm. The constant and innocent movement of the waves gave me a feeling of peace. This was the water I have known, and not the one I have been watching on TV.

It seemed to me that the water was saying, "It is not my fault." It felt as if the water had a hand, and it was pointing a finger up to the few clouds passing, or to the wind, just a calming breeze, or to the sky, which was as blue as it could be, or, perhaps, towards Heaven.

Was it God? Was Hurricane Katrina an act of God? We can speculate, but we do not know. If God did not do it, He certainly has allowed it to happen. Is He so upset with us? Is He trying to teach us a lesson? If He has a lesson to teach us, why would He choose such a drastic way?

In the Old Testament, God acted many times in righteous anger and used drastic ways to teach mankind. During Noah's times, He tried in many ways to make people change their sinful lives. People did not change (Genesis 6: 5-7). On the contrary, they laughed in Noah's face. Without Noah and his faith in God, we would not have been regenerated.

There are things we do which, I believe, make God upset. We are guilty of pride, which makes us fool around with Mother Nature — in other words, with the laws and order God has put in nature. He does not like our greed, which makes us interfere with lands that are not ours. Not only do the animals of the earth need their space, but so do our rivers, our marshes and our oceans.

In the *Parable of the Ungrateful Servant* (Matthew 18: 21-35), the Lord teaches about another issue which makes God unhappy with us. In this parable, the Kingdom of Heaven is compared with a king who called his subjects to account. One of his servants owed him

a thousand talents, which is an immeasurable sum of money. He was not able to pay it back. He knelt and begged the king to have pity on him. The king had mercy on him and canceled all his debt. When the servant went out, he met one of his own servants who owed him a "hundred dinarii," which was not very big sum. Instead of forgiving him, he "grabbed him and began to choke him," and had him "thrown into prison until he could pay the debt."

When the other fellow servants saw what had happened, they were "greatly distressed," and informed the master. The king became very angry, and he called the servant back. "You wicked servant," he said, "I forgave all that debt of yours because you begged me. Should you not also have compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?" The upset king then turned him over "to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed."

The Lord concludes the parable with these words: "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart."

God does not want us to be like the ungrateful servant — revengeful, hateful, with no forgiveness for his fellow man. On the contrary, if we understand the event of Hurricane Katrina as God's settling an account with us, it should humble us, should make us kinder, with more forgiveness in our hearts.

Forgiveness is the best medicine to heal many new and newly open wounds that we — as individuals, or groups of people, or as a nation — might have. We must forgive the waters, and the incomprehensible ways of our God, and our fellow man, so then we can forgive ourselves.

As I was looking at the calming waters on the seashore of Bridgeport, I observed also that the finger I was pointing was turning towards myself. I remembered what the Lord said to the accusers of the sinful woman: "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first" (John 8:7). Then, I dropped into the sand of the seashore the rock I had picked up to throw at the waters.

Moving?

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THE ROLE OF EDUCATION IN THE ORTHODOX CHURCH

By Janet Beese Superintendent Orthodox Christian Academy, Warren, Ohio

The Orthodox Church is didactic in nature. It is in itself a school where we go to learn about God. Everyothing in the Church is a tool for learning our faith. The sicons, music and frescoes help us to understand the scripture and stories of the Church. The liturgical services are comprised of over 90% scripture, which we pray back to God. In celebration of feast days, we commemorate or remember together these eternal events. We enter into eternal time with God: as if the feast day is happening now. For this reason, we say 'Christ is Risen' in the present tense instead of 'Christ has Risen' in the past tense. Through participation in the Church, we are illumined. Our willingness to commune with God and participate in liturgical commemorations help us to understand the scriptures and the eternal salvation plan of God.

Through communion with God, we learn about Him and of Him. In order to maintain communion with God, we have to learn about God and the experience of God. This can only happen if people are participating faithfully in the liturgical and sacramental life of the Church. Why have people chosen to participate minimally? They have become separated from the Church. How can you learn your faith if you partici-

pate only sparingly?

Why have people chosen to step away from their faith? One factor is secularism. Secularism is a cancer in our Church. It is not in opposition to God; it compartmentalizes our lives in terms of how we relate to God. People categorize their lives into different areas such as vocation, home, leisure and faith. They have become selective in what they seek from the Church and have become minimal in their participation. But, the Orthodox Church is Theocentric. God must be at the center of our lives. Our communion with God is our worldview and the lens through which we see all areas of day-to-day living.

How can the Orthodox Church survive in our culture? We must have a vision and a worldview in order to preserve our children and evangelize our faith. The best way to accomplish this goal is education – not of the mind only, but of both mind and spirit. St. Theophan the Recluse stated: "Of all thy Holy works, the education of children is the most Holy." We must not only educate our children in their faith, but they must be taught to see the world through their faith. Only then can they critically evaluate the culture in which they

PARISH NOTES

IN HONOR OF 50 YEARS ...

ST. GEORGE, CANTON, OH - Sunday, September 25, 2005, marked a most special occasion in the life of George & Elizabeth Oancea, faithful parishioners of St. George the Great Martyr Church in Canton, Ohio. In honor of their 50 years of marriage, a festive banquet was given by their sons, James, Archdeacon David, Timothy and their families with the request that donations be given to the church in lieu of gifts. The highlight of this day was the "surprise" of having His Grace, Bishop IRINEU with us to serve the Hierarchal Divine Liturgy. Met at the doors of the church by children offering gifts of flowers and Rev. Fr. George Treff, pastor of St. George, bearing the Holy Gospel and cross, Bishop IRINEU celebrated the Hierarchal Liturgy assisted by Fr. George, Archdeacon David and Hierodeacon Sebastian (Dumitrascu). At the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy, a prayer was offered for the children of the parish as they begin a new year of church school, and a marriage blessing was offered in honor of George & Elizabeth, served by Bishop IRINEU. At that time, a hand-carved wooden blessing cross was offered to the parish as a gift from the Oancea family. Used at Dormition Monastery in Rives Junction, Michigan, on the feast of the Elevation of the Cross and blessed by Archimandrite ROMAN (Braga), the cross now rests on the Holy Altar Table. As another "surprise" of the day, Bishop IRINEU presented Fr. George with a beautiful pectoral cross, stating his pleasure and knowledge of the Godly ministry of the priesthood which Fr. George has served for over 25 years. In affirmation, the Archdeacon and Hierodeacon and all the faithful proclaimed "Axios!". The two hundred guests in attendance truly showed their love for George & Elizabeth on this most special day. Their families are to be commended for choosing to honor not only their parents, but most importantly to honor God from whom all blessings flow. La multi ani to George & Elizabeth!

Psa. Paula Treff

are surrounded in order to discern good from evil, Orthodoxy from heterodoxy.

As our culture becomes increasingly hostile to the Orthodox way of life and thought, the need is greater than ever for Orthodox schools that will teach children to see the world around them through the lens of the One, Holy and Apostolic faith. Along with an outstanding education, an Orthodox school directs children back to the Church where the mysteries can be revealed, and they can inherit eternal life.

This is the time to act! Everyone needs to consider the value of an Orthodox education for our children.

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THE CARDOD THE CARDOD THE DO
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ARCOLA ... Cont. from page 6

and had the opportunity to get acquainted.

That afternoon found us in a very rainy Montreal with Fr. Ion driving us to the St. Nicholas meeting hall. Here we found Fr. Dr. Cezar Vasiliu waiting for us along with fifteen ladies from St. Nicholas Mission and the Ascension of the Lord Mission (Inaltarea Domnului). Because the ladies were mainly Romanian-speaking, Dr. Eleanor enjoyed the opportunity to practice her Romanian. Psa. Colleen spoke in English with translations beautifully done by President Daniela-Marinela Bochis of the Inaltarea Domnului parish. The content of our presentations were similar to those given in the morning. Together, we encouraged the missions to become members of A.R.C.O.L.A. and send their delegates to the annual meeting of R.O.D.O.C. at the Orthodox Christian Centre just outside of Fort Qu'Appelle, Saskatchewan. At the conclusion of the meeting, we went into the church for the reading of the Akathist to the Holy Parents Joachim and Anna led by Fr. Vasiliu. We returned to the hall and enjoyed a tasty buffet and visited with the members of the missions.

Upon arrival back to the Buna Vestire parish house, we joined a church school teachers' meeting, which was in progress. The teachers were planning the new school year and were previewing teaching materials. They were very enthusiastic.

Our visit concluded on Sunday with Divine Liturgy celebrated by Fr. Tofan and two assistant priests and a church full of people and small children taking Communion. What a marvelous feeling to be together with our sisters from the Eastern province of Quebec.

Dr. Eleanor Bujea, President and Preoteasa Colleen Ungrin, Vice-President

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Neagu-Rusu, Alessia, daughter of Marius V. & Raluca M. Neagu-Rusu, Thornhill, ON. St. George, Toronto, ON.

Godparents: Ioan & Angela Matei.

Nicole, Juliana Connie Schmitz, daughter of Jody & Stacey Schmitz, Landmark, MB. St. Elias, Lennard, MB. Godparents: Sandra Leclerc and Geraldine Bruketa.

Nitulescu, Alexia Maria, daughter of Marin & Pusa Ramona G. Nitulescu, Montreal, QC. Annunciation, Montreal, QC. Godparents: Constantin & Anca Capriciu.

Paljan, Tijana, daughter of Virdjinel & Ivana V. Paljan, Ridgewood, NY. Sts. Michael & Gabriel, Middle Vil-

lage, NY. Godparent: Cvetan P. Nincev.

- Pavalache, Alexander, son of Sergiu & Liliana Pavalache, Toronto, ON. St. George, Toronto, ON. Godparents: Dimitrie & Maria Caldare.
- Petri, Isabela, daughter of Bogdan I. & Simona M.M. Petri, Mississauga, ON. St. George, Toronto, ON. Godparents: Sorin & Alina Armenciu.
- Pop, Daniel Sebastian, son of Florin G. & Iuliana P. Pop, Westland, MI. Descent of Holy Spirit, Warren, MI. Godparents: Marcel & Rodica Hegyi.
- Popa, Nicole, daughter of Andrei & Veronica L. Popa, Montreal, QC. Ascension, Montreal, QC. Godparents: Sorin & Daniela
- Pope, Tiffany Lee Stefania, daughter of Vincent & Cheryl S. Pope, Livonia, MI. Sts. Peter & Paul, Dearborn Heights, MI. Godparent: Margaret Vardouniotis.
- Popovschi, Alexandra Renee, daughter of Cristian & Despina C. Popovschi, Oviedo, FL. Sts. Michael & Gabriel, Orlando, FL. Godparents: Dumitru & Carmen Aldea.
- Procopetz, Daniel Blayke, son of Daniel B. & Crista D.R. Procopetz, Roblin, MB. St. John, Shell Valley, MB. Godparents: Chantelle & Kristin Edwards and Jeff A. Korbet.
- Rosu, Monica Claudia, daughter of Marcel C. & Daniela I. Rosu, New York, NY. St. Dumitru, New York, NY. Godparent: Carmen Dinu.
- **Shochet, Benjamin Gregory**, son of Randall M. & Paula E.H. Shochet, Lake Worth, FL. Holy Cross, Hollywood, FL. Godparents: Ovidiu Horsia and Anda Ritchey.
- Sicoe, Alexander Nicolas, son of Lucian & Gabriela Z. Sicoe, Milton, ON. St. George, Toronto, ON. Godparents: Adrian & Doina Fogarasi.
- Soimu, Ana Maria, daughter of Nicolae & Gabriela G. Soimu, Lasalle, QC. Ascension, Montreal, QC. Godparents: Marius & Anisoara C. Raduca.
- Stefanescu, Isabel Anna, daughter of Dragos & Maria L. Stefanescu, North York, ON. St. George, Toronto, ON. Godparents: Bogdan & Daniela Stefanescu.
- Talpa, Anthony Patrick, son of Gabriel & Colleen Talpa, Cleveland, OH. St. Mary Cathedral, Cleveland, OH. Godparents: Daniel & Florentina Talpa.
- Talpa, Jacob Thomas, son of Ovidiu & Jennifer Talpa, North Royalton, OH. St. Mary Cathedral, Cleveland, OH. Godparents: Cristian & Otilia Talpa.
- Tipurita, Roxana, daughter of Gabriel & Dana S. Tipurita, Sterling Heights, MI. Descent of Holy Spirit, Warren, MI. Godparents: Cosmin & Lavinia Bucur.

- **Trif, Alexandru Matei Irvin,** son of Marin & Claudia Trif, Phoenix, AZ. St. John, Glendale, AZ. Godparents: Irvin & Camelia Remer.
- **Trif, Gabriela Adriana Camelia,** daughter of Marin & Claudia Trif, Phoenix, AZ. St. John, Glendale, AZ. Godparents: Irvin & Camelia Remer.
- **Trimbitas, Julien Tudor,** son of Viorel & Elena G. Trimbitas, Brooklyn, OH. St. Mary Cathedral, Cleveland, OH. Godparents: George & Mihaela Rusu.
- Ungureanu, David, son of Daniel & Elena C.G. Ungureanu, Laval, QC. Ascension, Montreal, QC. Godparents: Radu & Irina Paul.
- Ungureanu, Thomas George, son of Eugen E. & Diana G.S. Ungureanu, Richmond Hill, ON. St. George, Toronto, ON. Godparents: Marcel & Diana Salajan.
- Walker, Dacian Ellis, son of David E. & Lavinia A.V. Walker, Louisville, KY. Descent of Holy Spirit, Warren, MI. Godparents: Iuliu & Mariana Vasilescu.

RECEIVED INTO THE CHURCH

Bruketa, James, Penhold, MB. St. Elias, Lennard, MB. Rev. Fr. Joseph MacLellan.

MARRIAGES

- Adler, Robert Charles and Cezarina Dusescu, Lasalle, QC. Annunciation, Montreal, QC. Godparents: John & Ann Zikos.
- Anderson, Nathan Forrest and Cristina Antuanela Raulea, Lakewood, OH. St. Mary Cathedral, Cleveland, OH. Godparents: Eugen & Speranta Ardelean.
- Bogdan, Ioan Iosif and Diana Artemiza Klein, Olmsted Falls, OH. St. Mary Cathedral, Cleveland, OH. Godparents; Rev. Fr. Remus & Psa. Elena Grama.
- Bosioc, Eugen and Ana Divile, Brampton, ON. St. George, Toronto, ON. Godparents: Petre & Crenguta Dalea.
- Bruketa, James Friederich and Geraldine Gale Gorda, Penhold, AB. St. Elias, Lennard, MB. Godparents: Glen Gorda and Sandra Leclerc.
- Cistoldi, Paul and Beatrice Dobrescu, Gilbert, AZ. St. John, Glendale, AZ. Godparents: Antoniu & Carmen Sorce.
- Fargette, Jean Christophe and Iuliana Marinela Lulelaru, Saint Eustache, QC. Annunciation, Montreal, QC. Godparents: Seta Demirciyan and Harout Gebelnian.
- Gogioiu, Bogdan and Adina Mariana Ion, Leesburg, FL. Sts. Michael & Gabriel, Orlando, FL. Godparents: Gheorghe & Elena Bumbu.
- Jecu, Ionel Jaerzinio and Oana Maria Pastor, Hollywood, FL. Holy Cross, Hollywood, FL. Godparents: Codrut & Mia Jicman.
- Jones, Thomas Neil and Mirela G. Ardelean, Gilbert, AZ. St. John, Glendale, AZ. Godparents: Mark & Stephanie Vilensky.
- Moore, Darragh Thomas and Daniela Oprea, Boca Raton, FL. Holy Cross, Hollywood, FL. Godparents: Jeffrey & Florentina Hutt.
- Morin, Jonathan Nicolas Nelson and Madalina Surcel, Montreal, QC. Ascension, Montreal, QC. Godparents: Petrino & Luiza Buzatu.
- Nimat, Adrian Nicolae and Nicoleta Alexandra Neacsu, Romania, St. Dumitru, New York, NY. Godparents: Serban & Ana Apostolina.

Parish Register

Cont. from page 15

Olavaria, Philip and Lacrimioara Iovin, Phoenix, AZ. St. John, Glendale, AZ. Godparents: Dorel & Luciana Muresan.

Paraschivu, Dorel Sandu and Sandra Maria Vultur, Glendale, AZ. St. John, Glendale, AZ. Godparents: David & Monica Varga.

Pavel, Constantin and Ruxandra Busuioc, Montreal, QC. Ascension, Montreal, QC. Godparents: George & Oana Munteanu-Mihnea.

Polis, Athan and Ana M. Stefan, Glenridge, NJ. St. Dumitru, New York, NY. Godparents: David & Petrina Dawson.

Popescu, Darius Liviu and Maritess Reyes, Montreal, QC. Annunciation, Montreal, QC. Godparents: Cristian V. Novacescu and Carla R. Pacas.

Randolph, Travis Edward and Adriana Stanoiu, Peoria, AZ. St. John, Glendale, AZ. Godparents: Geniu & Maria Deian.

Socol, Florin and **Nicoleta Cucu,** Cleveland, OH. St. Mary Cathedral, Cleveland, OH. Godparents: Marcel & Maria Opris.

FALLEN ASLEEP IN THE LORD

Bondy, Olympia, 87. Sts. Peter & Paul, Dearborn Heights, MI.

Comsia, Nick, 83. St. George, Canton, OH.

Cornea, Victoria, 95. Sts. Peter & Paul,

Dearborn Heights, MI.

Coste, Martian, 57. Holy Cross, Hollywood, FL.

Firth, Victoria, 83. Holy Cross, Hollywood, FL.

Flench, Victoria, 84. St. George, Canton, OH.

Gaber, Lena, 90. St. Elias, Lennard, MB.

Gabrean, Sofia, 99. St. George Cathedral, Southfield, MI.

Gerros, Victoria, 93. St. George, Canton, OH.

Iovita, Ana, 84. St. John, Glendale, AZ.

Nylander, Vera, 74. St. Elias, Lennard, MB.

Tapos, Floare, 73. Sts. Peter & Paul, Dearborn Heights, MI.

Turza, Frank Nicholas, 72. Sts. Peter & Paul, Dearborn Heights, MI.

Zurz, Margareta, 73. Sts. Michael & Gabriel, Middle Village, NY.

Preotese Retreat

Cont. from page 8

way to the retreat, I was busy writing a list of chores to be done and seriously wondering if I shouldn't just stay home. On the way home from Detroit, I was rejoicing at having been able to go to the retreat, and wishing I could stay longer. We'd all like to thank our Archbishop for sponsoring and supporting these retreats, to Mother Gabriella and the nuns at Rives Junction for their warm hospitality, to our speakers for inspiring us, and to our husbands and parishes for encouraging us to come. And next year we hope to see many more preotese at our retreat!

Psa. Nicole Mitescu

Thine Own ... Cont. from page 3

in Church: thus we bless water, and then drink it out of plastic cups destined straight for the landfill! What the Crete conference calls for is simply a consistent attitude of respect in all our dealings with the world. We cannot expect to leave no trace on our environment. We have to choose either to make it reflect greed and ugliness - the pile of used packaging, the polluted river with its dead or mutant fish, the barren eroded hillside - or to use it in such a way that its beauty shows God's handiwork through ours.

Recognizing that the Church community should take the lead in making manifest the ethos of the Church, the Crete conference makes a number of sug-

gestions:

• initiating programs of Christian environmental education at all levels.

 involvement by parishes in local initiatives, such as organizing recycling programs, conserving energy in buildings, and encouraging less use of the car.

 holding educational gatherings covering fields from theology to environmental sciences, in order to aid the Church in further practical involvement in environmental and bioethical issues. These should involve Church members and non-Orthodox experts in scientific and ecological fields.

• mobilizing Orthodox young people to initiate projects

of environmental action.

Practical steps such as these are essential, if limited in nature. The underlying message needs to be heard clearly: "the Church should offer once more this simple, yet fulfilled way of life to its own believers as well as to the wider world. Humanity needs a simpler way of life, a renewed asceticism, for the sake of creation."

The author, Dr. Elizabeth Theokritoff is an Orthodox theologian and writer from England, and former Secretary of the Anglican - Orthodox Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius. This article is from The Orthodoxy and Ecology Resource Book produced by SYNDESMOS, The World Fellowship of Orthodox Youth. Editors: Alexander Belopopsky and Dimitri Oikonomou. Printed by Orthdruk Orthodox Printing House, Bialystok, Poland, 1996.

The Role ... Cont. from page 11

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The Orthodox faithful need to financially support this ministry, which is still in its infancy. While most parochial schools have the financial backing of their parishes, sadly, Holy Trinity Orthodox Christian Academy is supported by only a few parishes in the Trumbull/ Mahoning area. We hope you will consider not only a personal contribution, but adding Holy Trinity Academy to your annual parish budget.

Originally appeared in the Holy Trinity Orthodox

Christian Academy Newsletter, Fall 2005.

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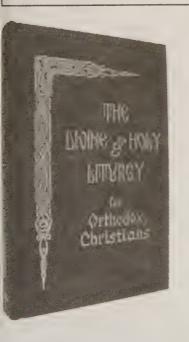
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CUVÂNT DE SUFLET

Sfânta Cruce "Simbolul Mântuitoarelor Patimi."

Încercând să înțelegem importanța praznicului Înălțării Sfintei Cruci, ca și plasarea sa la începutul anului bisericesc, trebuie să ne răspundem în primul rând la o întrebare. Oare ce vrea să însemne această asociere dintre începutul anului bisericesc și praznicul Sfintei Cruci? Există cu adevărat o legătură între acestea, sau această stare de fapt e pur și simplu întâmplătoare?

Apelând la înțelepciunea teologiei Sfinților Părinți, suntem chemați în acest timp concret din cursul anului bisericesc să ne înțelegem existența în această lume, în timp şi spațiu, ca aflându-se sub semnul Sfintei Cruci.

Deşi Dumnezeu şi-a dorit o creatură veşnic fericită, care să nu ştie ce înseamnă durerea, amăgirea şi deşertăciunea, libera voință a omului a făcut ca viața acestuia să fie o alternanță între bucurie şi durere, între amăgire şi certitudine, între încredere şi dezamăgire. Nu aparține în cele din urmă lui Dumnezeu suferința omului, ci ea este un rod al liberei sale alegeri. Înțelegând astfel existența omului, putem spune împreună cu Părintele Stăniloae, că asupra lumii, în chip văzut şi nevăzut se află întipărit semnul Sfintei Cruci.

Dar cum s-a ajuns ca începutul anului bisericesc să coincidă cu data de 1 septermbrie? Ca și în cazul multor altor realități ale tradiției iudaice sau romane, preluate și încreștinate de generațiile creștine ale primelor secole, tot astfel s-a întâmplat și cu începutul anului bisericesc. Primii creștini au preluat începutul anului nou la 1 septembrie, pentru că așa era și la evrei și la romani, însă i-au schimbat conținutul, fapt consfințit ulterior la Sinodul I Ecumenic de la Niceea, din anul 325.

Potrivit tradiției iudaice, în septembrie proorocul Moise a primit Legea pe muntele Sinai, și tot în această lună arhiereul intra o dată pe an în Sfânta Sfintelor Templului din Ierusalim, pentru a aduce jertfă pentru sine și pentru păcatele poporului.

Potrivit înțelegerii tradiției creştine, trei lucruri am putea spune despre începutul anului bisericesc la data de 1 septembrie. În primul rând, pe data de 1 septembrie este prăznuit Cuviosul Simeon Stâlpnicul și mama sa. Nu este întâmplător că prima zi a anului bisericesc ne aduce în atenție viața de sfințenie a unei mame împreună cu fiul ei, iar ceea ce Biserica a urmărit prin aceasta este să arate ideea legăturii dintre fiu și mamă, în dobândirea sfințeniei, ca tipologie creștină de urmat. Cu toții am avut sau încă mai avem mame, și știm cât de mult a contat pentru noi chipul creștin al mamei. Putem spune că fiii sau ficele sunt în general icoane ale chipului creștin al mamelor lor. Această idee a

vrut Biserica să o exprime din prima zi a anului bisericesc, arătând că de felul de a fi al mamei depinde în general progresul în sfințenie al fiilor și fiicelor.

În al doilea rând, trebuie să observăm că anul bisericesc se termină şi începe printr-un praznic al Maicii Domnului. La 15 august prăznuim Adormirea Maicii Domnului, iar la 8 septembrie prăznuim Nașterea Maicii Domnului. Ce să înțelegem prin aceasta? Trebuie să conștientizăm că întreg timpul liturgic al anului bisericesc, şi împreună cu acesta, întreaga noastră viață se află sub protecția, sub omoforul Maicii Domnului. Prin Ea suntem fii ai Fiului Ei, prin Ea ne bucurăm de lucrarea lui Dumnezeu în noi şi tot prin Ea vom avea parte de odihnă în sânurile Părintelui Ceresc, în veșnicie.

În al treilea rând, prin prăznuirea Sfintei Cruci, imediat după Nașterea Maicii Domnului, Biserica vrea să ne pregătească să înțelegem că existența ca atare presupune asumarea de către fiecare a unei cruci, oricare ar fi aceasta. Ca model al asumării crucii, după cuvântul Domnului: "Cel ce vrea să vină după Mine, să se lepede de sine, să-și ia crucea și să-Mi urmeze Mie!" (Mc 8, 34), creștinii din toate timpurile o au ca model pe Maica Domnului. Cine ar putea să ne învețe mai bine decât Maica Domnului, ce înseamnă purtarea suferinței, răbdarea ocărilor, ca si bucuria sinceră?

Am încercat până aici să înțelegem cum s-a ajuns ca începutul anului bisericesc să fie pe 1 septembrie, și care ar fi semnificația teologică a plasării sale în acest timp calendaristic concret. În continuare, considerăm necesare anumite clarificări legate de teologia crucii.

Deși praznicul de la 14 septembrie înseamnă serbarea unui eveniment petrecut pe 14 septembrie 327 la Ierusalim, în timpul patriarhului Macarie, când Sfânta Elena a descoperit lemnul Crucii Mântuitorului, fapt istorisit de istoricul Eusebiu de Cezareea, totuși Biserica, în profunzimea înțelegerii acestui praznic, încearcă de fiecare dată să explice creștinilor lucruri mult mai profunde, decât reproducerea evenimentului istoric ca atare. Pe 14 septembrie și nu numai, Biserica arată lumii care este sensul suferinței, că omul deși confruntat cu multe necazuri, nu e singur; că suferința e împletită cu bucuria, sau mai bine zis, că la adevărata bucurie nu se poate ajunge fără suferință. Nu există altă cale spre înviere, decât asumarea crucii, creștinismul fiind cel care a reușit să schimbe optica lumii în ceea ce privește înțelegerea suferinței. În Biserică vorbim despre asumarea crucii (a suferinței), ca bucurie, ceva ce ar

Cont. la pag. 22

Sărbătoarea Hramului "Vetrei Românești"



Este al doilea an de când s-a redeschis sărbătorirea Hramului Vetrei Româneşti, Închinat Naşterii Preacuratei Născătoarei de Dumnezeu, sărbătorită în fiecare an la 8 septembrie. Ctitorul de pioasă amintire PS Episcop Policarp Moruşca, a dorit la Vatra o Mănăstire, un loc al rugăciunii neîncetate unde fiecare creştin să-şi regăsească pacea şi liniştea sufletească, unde să-şi astâmpere dorul de casă şi de ţara noastră îndepărtată, lucru care până în momentul de față nu s-a putut realiza, dar, noi cei rămaşi avem marea responsabilitate să îndeplinim această dorință a ctitorului şi să facem din Vatra ceea ce a vrut să facă PS Policarp.

Anul acesta, din încredințarea IPS Nathaniel, Prea Sfințitul Irineu s-a ocupat de buna organizare a hramului. Deși data de 8 septembrie a căzut într-o zi de lucru, au participat peste 200 de persoane, venite din zonele Detroit-ului și din Cleveland, iar un număr de 30 de preoți și 6 diaconi au împodobit slujba arhierească.

Sărbătoarea a început cu vecernia și litia din ajunul aramului, slujită de P. Cuv Arhimandrit Dr. Mihail Filimon, starețul Mănăstirii înălțarea Domnului din Detroit, răspunsurile la strană fiind date de călugării mănăstirii, iar în tronurile arhierești au asistat IPS Nathaniel, IPS Nicolae, PS Serafim din Canada și PS (rineu.

A doua zi, la orele 10:00 a.m. a început liturghia arhierească în biserica mare de la Vatra, într-o atmosferă de liniște și înălţare sufletească, predica zilei fiind costită în limba engleză de PS Serafim din Canada, iar în limba română de către P Cuv Arhimandrit Roman

Braga. La sfârșitul Sfintei Liturgii a avut loc slujba parastasului pentru ctitorii Vetrei Românești, unde au fost pomeniți toți părinții și frații noștri cei din veac adormiți. Înalt Prea Sfințitul Nathaniel a mulțumit tuturor pentru participare și buna organizare.

A urmat o agapă creştinească în pavilionul mare, unde toată lumea s-a ospătat cu mâncare tradițional românească, donată de familia Dorian şi Kim Conty din Chicago, cărora le mulţumim şi rugăm pe Dumnezeu să le facă parte de tot binele şi multă sănătate la întreaga familie.

În cadrul banchetului oferit credincioşilor participanţi la sărbătoarea Hramului, a luat cuvântul IPS Arhiepiscop Nicolae, PS Episcop Irineu, PC Preot Nicolae Izbaşa şi PC Protopop Laurenţiu Lazăr.

Nu în ultimul rând, dorim să mulţumim corului de teologi "SINAXIS" condus de ipodiaconul John Lazăr, care au împodobit cu cântarea lor slujba din ziua hramului, zi a bucuriei duhovniceşti, cinstind aşa cum se cuvine sărbătoarea Nașterii Maicii Domnului şi acest loc plin de istorie prin care ne regăsim ca şi creştini ortodocși români pe acest continent, cum frumos sublinia în cuvântul său Părintele Roman Braga "Vatra este o casă a românilor unde trebuie păstrate cu sfințenie tradiția, obiceiurile şi identitatea noastră națională."

Dumnezeu să răsplătească tuturor dragostea şi să împlinească tuturor rugăciunile înălțate aici, în acest loc sfânt, către Bunul Dumnezeu şi Prea Curata Sa Maică Fecioara Maria.

Va aşteptăm cu drag să ne revedem cu pace, linişte și sănătate, anul viitor la Hramul Vetrei Românești.

Participant

RECENZIE

Să cautăm întâi Împărăția! Trăind viața în stil ortodox de Pr. Cornel Todeasa Theology Inspirational

Regina Orthodox Press, 2005

Să cautăm întâi Împărăția este o carte de teologie înaltă, dar totuși accesibilă publicului larg, deoarece preotul Cornel Todeasa își ia de mână cu dragoste cititorii și cu blândețe îi invită să participe la un dialog autentic cu ceea ce înseamnă creștinul ortodox. Aceste povestiri anecdoticë autobiografice se referă la întâlnirile sale cu credința sub toate aspectele ei: împărtășanie, religiozitate, rugăciune, post, danie, martiraj, călăuziri spirituale și cunoașterea celorlalți, de la episcop la mireni.

Fie că el se descrie pe sine ca tânăr ortodox care nu aparţine clerului, cel din satul natal din România, aflat sub influenţa mătuşii sale, Maica Apolinaria şi uneori sub sfatul aspru al părintelui Arsenie, fie că descrie cei mai recenţi ani în calitate de preot ortodox în America, toate povestirile sale stau sub semnul temei esenţiale a minunii, a gloriei şi alinării pe care Dumnezeu ni le poate oferi când noi îl lăsăm în viaţa noastră cea de toate zilele.

Să luăm de exemplu capitolul "Ar trebui să ne avem rădăcinile în Cer", unde părintele Cornel discută despre greutatea pe care el a simțit-o adesea ca imigrant încercând să-și stabilească rădăcini în noua țară, după ce și-a lăsat țara de origine. Dar apoi el ajunge la concluzia că prin concentrarea pe sentimentul că el n-a aparținut pe deplin nici unei țări, el a pierdut întregul sens și că "... rădăcinile noastre ar trebui să fie în Cer cu lucrurile Domnului. Acestea sunt rădăcinile din care ar fi trebuit să cresc. Îmi aduce mângâiere faptul de a ști că acest sentiment de a nu aparține de nicăieri, de a nu avea rădăcini niciunde pe pământ ar putea fi începutul de "a-mi crește rădăcini" în cele din urmă "în locul potrivit."

Aceste eseuri, care-i relevă preotului Cornel concepția pozitivă și dragostea de viață, pentru ceilalți și pentru Dumnezeu, luminează cu lumina Duhului Sfânt. Scopul său este să ne asigure că în fiecare dintre noi există o Împărăție interioară, infinită în adâncime și posibilități – aceeași Împărăție care va să vină.

Tot aşa, el ne arată calea spirituală prin care ni se deschid ochii şi minea noastră către faptul că Porțile Cerului sunt toate împrejurul nostru, aşa cum se ilustrează în capitolul "Trebuie să ne cultivăm propriul pământ", când el spune: "noi suntem tot atât de buni pe cât este pământul nostru. Prin urmare, trebuie să-lîngrijim, să-l cultivăm şi să-l hrănim aşa încât semințele – Cuvintele Domnului – să crească și să dea roade."





Să căutăm întâi Împărăţia este un ghid valoros şi o apropiere practică către viaţa ortodoxă şi poate fi citit de oricine: novice, începători în credinţă, teologi, ca şi de către aceia care pur şi simplu doresc să afle mai multe despre Creştinismul Ortodox.

Gale Bellas-Papageorge

Nota autorului: Părintele Cornel Todeasa s-a născut în Transilvania, România și a obținut doctoratul în Teologie la Universitatea din Oradea. În prezent este preot paroh la Biserica Ortodoxă Română "Sf. Dumitru" din Bridgeport, Connecțicut.



CE ESTE ANTIMISUL ŞI CARE ESTE ROSTUL ŞI SEMNIFICAŢIA LUI?

Între odoarele sau obiectele sfințite necesare săvârșirii ofintei Liturghii, la loc de frunte se situează și antimisul. Etimologic, cuvântul antimis înseamnă "în loc de masă" i vine de la grecesul antiminsion. Prin antimis ințelegem o bucată de stofă, de in sau de mătasc, de forma unui pătrat cu laturile de 50-60 centimetri, pe care este zugrăvită sau reprezentată scena punerii în normânt a Mântuitorului Hristos, având cusute pe spate, într-un mic buzunărel, relicve sau moaște de sfinți și pe care se săvârșește Sfânta Liturghie. Antimisul se strânge sau se pliază în patru, apoi se acooperă cu ilitonul, tot în aceași formă, având așezată pe el Sfânta Evanghelie. Când se folosește Sfânta Evanghelie, la vohoduri sau la cititul pericopelor peste sfântul antimis se așează o sfânta cruce. Numai când se desface. pentru săvârșirea Sfintei Liturghii, la ectenia pentru cei chemați, și până la aducerea pe el a cinstitelor daruri aflate pe sfântul disc și în sfântul potir, el rămânc, fără nimic pe el. După săvărșirea Sfintei Liturghii, la ectenia de multumire de după Sfânta Împărtășanie, el se strânge, așezându-se peste el Sfânta Evanghelie.

Originea antimisului trebuie pusă în legătură cu perioada persecuțiilor îndreptate împotriva creștinilor în primele secole ale existenței Bisericii. Atunci când păgânii persecutori sau eretici năvăleau asupra creștinilor, care săvărșeau Sfânta Liturghie, în bisericile ridicate de regulă pe mormintele martirilor, se acopereau sfintele daruri cu o pânză sfințită și se scoteau afară din biserici, continuându-se slujba în locuri retrase

sau ferite de urmăritori.

O vreme, creştinii purtau cu ei şi mese speciale pe care săvârşeau Sfânta Liturghie, în locuri ascunse, dar acestea, fiind mai greu de transportat, au fost înlocuite cu aceste bucăți de pânză în care s-au așezat părticele din moaște sau relicve de sfinți martiri, înlocuind în felul acesta Sfânta Masă din sfântul altar care are in piciorul ei, de la sfințire, moaște sau relicve de sfinți. De aici, denumirea de antimis, adică "în loc de masă," fiindcă el putea înlocui Sfânta Masă pentru săvârșirea Sfintei Liturghii.

După încetarea persecuţiilor, antimisul a rămas mai departe în întrebuinţarea liturgică, aşezându-se pe Sfânta Masă şi fără de care nu se poate săvârşi Sfânta Liturghie. El se sfinţeşte numai de către episcopul locului, după aceeaşi rânduială ca şi sfinţirea bisericii şi, dacă este posibil, deodată cu târnosirea locaşului de cult sau separat, prin stropirea cu vin, apă de trandafiri şi prin ungerea cu Sfântul şi Marele Mir, la care se adaugă aşezarea sfintelor moaşte sau relicve în buzunărelul



de pe spatele lui. Când se sfințeşte și se dă bisericii și preotului un nou antimis, moaștele din antimisul vechi se strămută în cel nou. Cel vechi, ieșit din uz, se păstrează în biserică, în loc curat, de regulă, în sfântul altar și, numai dacă ajunge în stare de mare degradare sau uzură, se arde, iar cenușa se îngroapă la temelia bisericii sau, dacă este posibil, în altarul bisericii.

În legătură cu antimisul se poate pune întrebarea de ce a mai fost nevoie de un asemenea obiect de cult după încetarea persecuțiilor și dacă nu putem săvârși Sfânta Liturghie și fără antimis, având în vedere că Sfânta Masă reprezintă sau simbolizează, prin excelență, mormântul Mântuitorului, pe când antimisul, doar giulgiul cu care a fost înfășurat capul Mântuitorului în mormânt și că Sfânta Masă este sfințită special de către episcop, având în piciorul ei moaște sau relicve de sfinți. Cu alte cuvinte, de ce mai este nevoie de această dublură, când putem foarte bine săvârși Sfânta Liturghie direct pe Sfânta Masă?

Fără îndoială cu Sfânta Liturghie poate fi săvârşită direct pe Sfânta Masă, având în vedere sfințenia ei. Dar şi prezența sfântului antimis este necesară, din

mai multe puncte de vedere.

În primul rând, sfântul antimis ne aduce aminte de acea perioadă importantă din viața Bisericii, făcândune să păstrăm mai vie comuniunea cu martirii și sfinții prezenți în lucrarea Bisericii și prin sfintele lor moaște si relicve.

În al doilea rând, antimisul este necesar și în vremea noastră, pentru situațiile de excepție din viața Bisericii, când Sfânta Liturghie trebuie săvârșită în afară de biserică, cum ar fi următoarele calamități naturale,

Cont. la pag. 22

Ce Este Antimisul ...

Cont. de la pag. 21

curemure, inundații, vreme de război, pe câmpurile de luptă, hramul sau sfințirea unei biserici, în spitalele unde nu există capele, în închisori ori unități militare s a

Dar, mai ales, antimisul, este necesar pentru faptul că el a devenit un simbol al autorității ierarhului respectiv, al binecuvântării sau încuviințării ca întrun locas de cult să se desfășoare o lucrare sfințitoare și al bunelor raporturi canonice dintre ierarhul locului si preotii slujitori. În acest sens, el este semnul văzut al împuternicirii preotului de a lucra într-o anume parohie. De aceea, antimisul are înscris pe el, pe lângă scenele care se zugrăvesc, numele ierarhului care l-a sfințit și biserica sau parohia pentru care este destinat, cu data sfințirii lui. Prin cartea canonică (singhelia), cu care preotul este împuternicit să lucreze într-o parohie, și prin sfântul antimis, preotul intră în deplinătatea drepturilor și îndatoririlor sacerdotale, ca delegat al episcopului. Aceasta îl obligă la ascultarea canonică față de chiriarh și nici unui preot nu-i este îngăduit să desfăsoare activitatea decât sub îndrumarea directă a episcopului și în totală armonie sau colaborare cu acesta. De aceea, atunci când ierarhul locului socotește să oprească pe preot de la săvârșirea celor sfinte, pentru grave abateri, îi ridică sfântul antimis, fapt ce nu-i mai dă voie preotului să săvârșească Sfânta Liturghie pe altarul acelei biserici, chiar dacă are la îndemână Sfânta Masă. Ridicarea antimisului

înseamnă ruperea legăturilor canonice dintre ierarh și preot, până la sancțiunea venită prin organele de judecată și aprobată de chiriarh.

De aceea, primul lucru pe care îl face un întâistătător de eparhie, după înscăunarea sa, este să dea antimise noi, gratuit, tuturor parohiilor şi preoților de sub jurisdicția sa, marcând prin aceasta autoritatea de ierarh al locului, față de care se impune ascultarea canonică. O dată cu noile antimise, cele vechi, sfințite şi dăruite de episcopul predecesor, ies din uz, păstrându-se în biserică.

Aşadar, antimisul a fost şi ramâne un obiect liturghic cu un rost bine definit și cu semnificații multiple. Pe lângă obiect sfânt și sfințitor, el este și semn al autorității ierarhice și al bunei rânduieli în Biserică. Prin autoritatea ierarhului — care împuternicește, prin antimis, pe preot să slujească cele sfinte — și prin ascultarea canonică la care este chemat preotul, se păstrează în Biserică disciplina și ordinea atât de necesare unei bune și rodnice lucrări. Această disciplină, ca și buna rânduială, sunt cu atât mai necesare în vremurile de cumpână prin care trece Biserica astăzi, când preoții, alături de ierarhi, trebuie să se angajeze, cu responsabilitate, în lucrarea pastorală și misionară nouă. Antimisul trebuie să-i amintească preotului că harul sfințitor i-a fost mijlocit de episcop, al cărui reprezentant în parohie este.

Pr. Prof. Dr. Nicolae D. Necula

Articol preluat din "Tradiție și înnoire în slujirea liturgică," volumul 2, Galați, 2001.

Cuvânt de Suflet

Cont. de la pag. 17

putea părea pentru unii o adevărată nebunie. Să te bucuri de o suferință asumată... Însă nimic nu e prea mult atunci când e vorba despre comuniunea cu Dumnezeu și de veșnicia unei existențe mântuite.

Părintele Stăniloae consideră că prin răstignirea Mântuitorului s-a întâmplat ceea ce nu s-a mai întâmplat niciodată, să fie cineva răstignit doar pentru binele pe care l-a făcut! Iar Sf. Ioan de Cronstadt e de părere că nu numai crucea, ci chiar şi umbra ei e extrem de înfricoşătoare demonilor.

Atât de mare a fost înțelegerea tainei Crucii Domnului în Biserica primară, încât Sf. Apostol Petru a refuzat răstignirea cu capul în sus și a preferat să se răstignească cu capul în jos, din respect pentru răstignirea Domnului. S-a considerat pe sine chiar și în suferință, nevrednic de a se afla în poziția răstignirii Domnului.

Sf. Apostol Petru, la I Petru 2, 24 ne-a spus că Domnul " a purtat păcatele noastre în trupul Său, pe lemn, pentru ca noi morți fiind față de păcate, să trăim pentru neprihănire." Aceeași teologie a crucii o găsim dezvoltată și de Sf. Apostol Pavel, care afirma la Efeseni 2,16 că Mântuitorul "prin Cruce a nimicit vrăjmășia," iar la I Cor 1,18 că "pentru noi cei care mergem pe calea mântuirii, crucea este puterea lui Dumnezeu."

Încercând să închei scurtul meu cuvânt, aş dori să vă fac să înțelegeți că pentru vremurile pe care le trăim, înțelegerea teologiei Sfintei Cruci pentru viața noastră, comportă și un alt aspect, și anume, acela că nu e necesar să ne purtăm doar propria noastră cruce, ci trebuie să ne ajutăm și semenul în acest sens. Să nu fim indiferenți față de greutățile și necazurile celor din jur, și prin fapta, cuvântul sau rugăciunea noastră să arătăm că un creștin nu e niciodată singur, chiar și în suferință. Fiți încrezători așadar în puterea Celui răstignit pe lemnul Sfintei Cruci, în Domnul și Mântuitorul nostru Iisus Hristos, Căruia să-I fie slava în veci. Amin.

+ IRINEU, Episcop Vicar

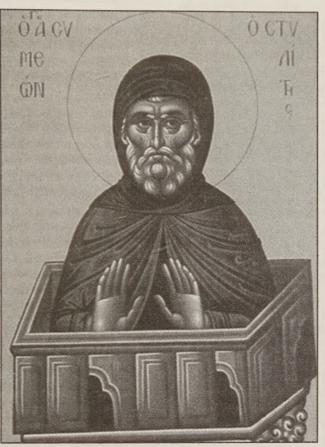
Educarea Creștină a Familiei

Sfântul Simeon Stâlpnicul 1 Septembrie

Sfântul Simeon tâlpnicul s-a născut în atul Sisan din Cilicia, vând părinți creștini și ind botezat de mic. Nu a ost dat la scoală, ci păștea ile tatălui său. La13 ani, ntr-o duminică de iarnă ând oile erau înăuntru și l a putut merge la iserică, auzind citindue din Sfânta Evanghelie ă fericiți sunt cei săraci, ei blânzi și cei curați cu nima a cerut să i se xplice aceasta, apoi, nțelegând, a fost adânc mpresionat și a hotărât săi dedice viața lui Dumnezeu. Nu s-a mai eîntors acasă, ci s-a dus ntr-un loc singuratic și 'căzând cu fața la pământ n chipul crucii" a început să se roage la Dumnezeu să-i arate cum se poate nântui. Adormind, a avut

vedenie: "I se părea că sapă o temelie și a auzit un glas zicându-i: "sapă mai dânc". Şi a săpat mai adânc. Iar când a încetat din cauza oboselii, socotind că este destul, iarăși a auzit glas poruncindu-i să sape tot mai adânc, și așa se ostenea săpând. Dar și a treia oară când încetă din ucru același glas îl trezi la osteneală. Apoi i-a zis: 'încetează, este destul! Iată, acum de voiești să zidești, zideste, ostenindu-te cu stăruință, că fără de osteneală nimic nu vei putea spori!" Această vedenie s-a împlinit cu dânsul, când a pus o asemenea temelie întru smerenie dâncă, spre zidirea sa și a altora." (Viețile Sfinților). Atunci s-a dus la o mânăstire unde a învățat pravila călugarească, iar la 18 ani s-a călugărit și "a ajuns la tâta înalțime duhovnicească, încât pe toți călugării le acolo i-a întrecut; căci frații mâncau, unii o dată pe i, spre seară, alții a treia zi, iar el toată săptămâna petrecea nemâncând." (Viețile Sfinților). Apoi Sfântul Simeon s-a rugat, pentru o vreme, într-o fântână pustie le unde a fost scos aproape mort de către egumenul nânăstirii la porunca unui vis de la Dumnezeu.

Când și-a revenit a plecat din nou într-o peșteră



mică de piatră dintr-un munte unde a trăit, în post și rugăciune, trei ani. Aici i-a cerut lui Vassos, mai marele duhovnicesc al călugărilor din munte, săi zidească ușa peșterii și să-l lase 40 de zile fără apă sau pâine. Vassos i-a zidit uşa peşterii, dar 1-a forțat să ia o pâine și apă cu el în peșteră. Peste 40 de zile când Vassos a deschis uşa peşterii, pâinea era neatinsă, apa de asemenea, dar Simeon era întins pe jos. Vassos 1-a ajutat să-și revină și de atunci, în fiecare an în Postul Paştelui, Simeon ținea post fără mâncare și fără apă timp de 40 de

Cuviosul Simeon şi-a supus trupul şi sufletul la multe încercări, iar vestea despre el s-a răspândit repede, mulţime de

oameni de toate neamurile venind să îl vadă şi primind mângâiere de la el. Pentru ca oamenii să nu se mai atingă de el, " a zidit un stâlp de şase coţi înălţime şi pe el o chiliuţă de doi coţi, unde, suindu-se, petrecea în post şi rugăciune, devenind astfel întâiul stâlpnic." (Vieţile Sfinţilor). Mai târziu oamenii i-au construit alt stâlp de 12 coţi, apoi de 22 de coţi, apoi de 36, iar ultimul stâlp, cel pe care a stat până la sfârşitul vieţii avea 40 de coţi. "Şi aşa se suia cuviosul pe aceşti stâlpi spre cele cereşti, ca pe nişte trepte, multe suferind, udându-se de ploaie, arzându-se de zăduf şi îngheţând de frig. Mâncarea lui era linte muiată şi drept băutură avea apă." (Vieţile Sfinţilor).

Cuviosul Simeon a fost ispitit de diavol care, luînd chip luminos ca îngerii, a apărut sus, lângă stâlpul lui cu o caretă cu cai de foc, spunându-i că pentru credința lui a fost trimis de Dumnezeu să-l ia ca pe Sfântul Ilie, să-l laude îngerii, etc. Cuviosul Simeon a ridicat piciorul drept să pășească în căruță, și în același timp și-a făcut semnul crucii. Când și-a făcut semnul crucii,

Cont. la pag. 24

Educarea Creștină a Familiei

Cont. de la pag. 23

careta a dispărut și atunci Simeon și-a dat seama că a greșit crezând arătării și și-a pedepsit piciorul drept stând un an întreg numai în el.

Tatăl Cuviosului Simeon murise la puţin timp după intrarea Sfântului în mânăstire iar după ani de zile, maica sa, Marta, aflând despre dânsul, a venit să îl vadă. Simeon i-a spus că dacă are puţină răbdare se vor vedea în viaţa viitoare. Dânsa, totuşi, dorea foarte mult să îl vadă şi Simeon i-a trimis vorbă să aştepte puţin în tăcere. Iar ea a adormit şi şi-a dat sufletul. "Şi îndată, cunoscând Sfântul sfârşitul ei, a poruncit să o aducă înaintea stâlpului şi, văzând-o, s-a rugat pentru dânsa cu lacrimi. Rugându-se el, sfântul ei trup se lumina şi faţa îi strălucea, încât toţi cei ce vedeau, se minunau, lăudând pe Dumnezeu. Şi au îngropat-o înaintea stâlpului său. Şi când făcea rugăciune, o pomenea de două ori în toată ziua." (Vieţile Sfinţilor)

Sfântul Simeon Stâlpnicul, care se sărbătorește în fiecare an pe 1 Septembrie, a trăit 103 ani din care 50 i-a petrecut pe stâlpi. Prin rugăciunile lui s-au făcut și se mai fac, încă, multe minuni.

Întrebări pentru părinți:

- În copilărie, Cuviosul Simeon de multe ori nu mergea la biserică pentru că păștea oile tatălui său. A patra din cele zece porunci zice: "Păzește ziua odihnei, ca să o ții cu sfințenie. Şase zile lucrează și-ți fă toate treburile tale; ziua a saptea este ziuă de odihnă a Domnului Dumnezeului tău. Să nu faci în ziua aceea nici un lucru; nici tu, nici fiul tău, nici asinul tău, nici străinul care se află la tine." Am discutat cu copiii noștri această poruncă? Oare i-am încurajat pe copii să-și facă lectiile sâmbăta pentru ca duminica să ne putem duce la biserică, apoi să ne bucurăm ca familie? Nu cumva este exact invers: sâmbăta dimineața mergem la activități sportive, etc, sâmbăta după masă la petreceri, iar duminica dimineață suntem prea obosiți pentru biserică și duminica după masă copiii intră în panică pentru că nu si-au terminat lecțiile pentru luni și toți sunt nervoși și țipă și numai ziua Domnului nu este?
- Nu cumva prin indiferenţa noastră i-am oprit pe copii să meargă la biserică sau nu am făcut tot ce am putut să-i ducem la biserică sau să-i învăţăm religie?
- Nu cumva avem părinți bătrâni care nu pot conduce maşina şi nu se pot duce la biserică dacă nu îi ducem noi, dar noi preferăm să dormim iar ei, săracii, nici nu mai îndrăznesc să ne roage de teamă că ne deranjează?
- Pentru a zidi trebuie să sapi adânc, şi mai adânc, şi mai adânc. Am muncit noi din răsputeri pentru

zidirea spirituală a sufletelor noastre? Am muncit noi din răsputeri pentru zidirea spirituală a sufletelor copiilor noștri?

- Până şi Sfântul Simeon Stâlpnicul a fost ispitit de diavol; de ce ne mirăm că noi şi copiii noştri suntem ispitiți? Sfântul Simeon a avut o armă puternică care l-a salvat: crucea cu care s-a însemnat înainte de a pleca. Ne însemnăm noi cu semnul crucii înainte de a pleca de acasă sau înainte de a începe o treabă? De ce îi lipsim pe copiii noştri de o apărare atât de importantă? Tot ce trebuie este să ne vadă pe noi făcând aceasta şi să le amintim din când în când. Când pleacă de acasă şi afară e frig, le amintim să-şi ia un pullover; dacă plouă le spunem să-şi ia ceva de ploaie. Atunci de ce ezităm să le spunem să-şi facă semnul crucii ?
- Când Sfântul Simeon Stâlpnicul se ruga pentru maica sa moartă, trupul și fața acesteia se luminau. Ne rugăm noi pentru morții noștri: părinți, bunici, moși, strămoși? I-am învățat pe copii să se roage pentru morți? Dar, oare, i-am rugat să se roage pentru cei vii: pentru ei înșiși, pentru părinți, pentru frații lor? Copiii se sfințesc prin părinții lor, dar și părinții se pot sfinți prin rugăciunile copiilor. Să ne rugăm lui Dumnezeu ca rugile copiilor noștri să ne ajute pe lumea aceasta și să ne mângâie când vom fi trecuți la Domnul. Şi să nu uităm: de noi depinde dacă copii noștri se vor ruga sau nu se vor mai ruga pentru noi când nu vom mai fi lângă ei.

Maica Preoteasă



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